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BY

WILLIS N. BUGBEE

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The Willis N. Bugbee Co., Syracuse, N. Y.

Bugbee's Popular Plays

Mrs. Deacon Spriggs

A Two Act Play For Women

BY

Willis N. Bugbee

Author of "Billy's Aunt Jane," "Aunt Sophronia at College," "The Old Class Reunion," "Graduation at Gayville," "Closing Day at Beanville School," etc., etc.

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THE WILLIS N. BUGBEE CO

SYRACUSE, N. Y.

PS635
.Z9B895

Mrs. Deacon Spriggs

CHARACTERS.

MRS. DEACON SPRIGGS, *the cause of the trouble.*

MRS. SYLVESTER PURDY, *a well-to-do resident.*

ELNORA PINK, *an eligible "young" lady.*

CYNTHIANA PINK, *her sister and equally eligible.*

MRS. PRINGLE, *very deaf.*

MRS. MOORE, *very stout and asthmatic.*

MRS. GRANT
MRS. BROWN
MRS. GOWDY
MRS. BUMPUS
MRS. GREENE
} *Neighbors of the Deacon.*

NORA, MRS. PURDY'S *new servant.*

TIME—*About thirty minutes.*

OCT 23 1919

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no 6

MRS. DEACON SPRIGGS

ACT I.

SCENE: *A porch or kitchen. Three or four kitchen chairs or a bench comprise the furnishings.*

(*Enter* MRS. GRANT *with tin of apples and knife, sits down*). Now I've got to sit right down here an' peel these apples first thing so's to get some pies ready for dinner. It would be a terrible calamity if John should have to go without his pie for one meal. No wonder his stomach's give out. I should think anybody's insides would get out of kilter eatin' pie three times a day. (*Peels apples. Looks up road.*) Well now, I declare if there ain't Betsy Bumpus a comin' here to borrow something. I never seen sech a woman for borrowin' in my born days as she is. First it's a drawin' of tea, then a loaf of bread, or a pair of shoes. Why last week she even wanted to borrow my tooth brush, but I draw the line on lendin' tooth brushes.

(*Enter* MRS. BUMPUS.)

MRS. B. Howdy do, Mis' Grant.

MRS. G. Howdy, Betsy. Come right in an' set down.

MRS. B. No, I can't set down. I jest came over to see if I could borrow your plaid shawl to go over to Beanville.

MRS. G. Wal, I dunno's there's anything to hinder ye. (*Starts to leave room.*)

MRS. B. An' say—if you don't mind I'd like to take your best bonnet an' them black kid gloves of yourn.

MRS. G. I s'pose you'll be real careful of 'em, won't you?

MRS. B. Of course I'll be careful of 'em—just as careful as if they was my own.

(MRS. G. *goes off R. and returns with bonnet, shawl and gloves.*)

MRS. G. Wal, here they be. Hain't nothin' else you think of is there? Don't want my best shoes an' best alpaca dress?

MRS. B. Land! how you talk! Jest as if I didn't have good shoes an' a best dress. Wal, I'm thankful I have—sech as they be. But say! I'd most forgot. I've got some news for ye.

MRS. G. Do tell! What is it?

MRS. B. It's the most outlandish thing you ever heard of. Deacon Spriggs has advertised for a wife.

MRS. G. Deacon Spriggs advertised for a wife? My land! You don't say!

MRS. B. Yes, it's gospel truth. I've got the paper right here with me. Jest listen an' I'll read it. (*Unfolds paper and reads.*)

"To whom it may concern:

The undersigned wishes to get a good capable woman to come and take care of house for a widower. Might consider matrimony with right party. Address or call on Azariah Spriggs, Greenville."

There! Did you ever hear the like of that?

MRS. G. No, I never did. Let's see, how many times has he been married—two or three times?

MRS. B. Three times an' this will make four.

MRS. G. Dear me! Who would ever have thought sech a heathenish thing would happen right here in this peaceable neighborhood.

MRS B. Wal, as I told Cynthiana Pink t'other day, you can't generally most always tell what men folks will do—'specially widowers an' deacons. Wal, I must be goin'. I've got to stop an' show this to Mrs. Brown an' then hustle home an' get ready to go to Beanville with Joshua. Good-bye. (*Exit.*)

MRS. G. Land o' livin'! That beats anything I ever heerd of, but I s'pose he's got a right to do it if he wants to. Now if here ain't Mrs. Nate Gowdy an' Mrs. Green comin'. I'll never get these pies done.

(*Enter* MRS. GOWDY *and* MRS. GREEN.)

MRS. GOWDY. 'Mornin', Mrs. Grant.

MRS. GRANT. 'Mornin', ladies. Come right in an' set down.

MRS. GREEN (*sitting down*). Don't let us interrupt you. Jest go right along with your work, Mrs. Grant. We're only goin' to stay a minute.

MRS. GOWDY. We jest stopped in to tell ye about Deacon Spriggs.

MRS. GRANT. Yes, I've heerd about him. Betsy Bumpus was jest here. She says he's advertised for a wife.

MRS. GREEN. Now ain't that the beatines' thing? Did she tell ye about his goin' away on the train night 'fore last?

MRS. GRANT. No, she didn't mention that.

MRS. GREEN. Wal, he did. He went on the 7:30 train an' he was all togged out in a new store suit an' a derby hat. My boy Jim was down to the depot when he went.

MRS. GOWDY. Most likely he's got a letter from some female in answer to his advertisement. I won't say *woman* because 'tain't no decent woman would answer sech an advertisement as that.

MRS. GREEN. I s'pose likely he's gone to see what kind of bargain he can make, same as if 'twas a hoss You know he's the greatest hoss trader in these parts—a reg'lar David Harum. As Hank Slocum says, "Anybody that gets ahead of Deacon Spriggs in a hoss trade has got to get up purty good season in the mornin'."

MRS. GRANT. I hope if he does find a woman that she'll make him toe the mark.

MRS. GOWDY. There's one thing—she can't expect the ladies round here will have much of anything to do with her under the circumstances.

OTHERS. Of course not.

MRS. GREEN. An' oh say! Did you hear that Mrs. Sylvester Purdy was goin' to give a party?

MRS. GRANT. No, when is it to be?

MRS. GREEN. Next Thursday afternoon, an' we're all invited. Of course we'll all have to go to it.

MRS. GOWDY. Wal do come along, Mrs. Green, we must be goin'.

MRS. GREEN. Yes, so we must. Good-bye, Mrs. Grant.

MRS. GRANT. Good-bye, an' do come again.

(*Exeunt* MRS. GREEN *and* MRS. GOWDY.)

MRS. GRANT. Wal, there! I've set an' talked an' hain't got these apples peeled yet. (*Works—pause.*) I do declare if here ain't somebody else comin'. It's Mrs. Brown.

(*Enter* MRS. BROWN.)

MRS. BROWN. Howdy do, Mrs. Grant.

MRS. G. Why, howdy do, Mrs. Brown. Come right in an' set down.

MRS. B. I can't stay long. I was goin' by an' I thought I must run in an' tell ye all about the Deacon. Have you heerd about him?

MRS. G. Yes, I heerd he'd advertised for a wife an' 'bout his goin' off on the train t'other night.

MRS. B. Wal, he's got back agin.

MRS. G. Do tell! An' did he bring her home with him?

MRS. B. I should say he did! He brought two of 'em.

MRS. G. For the land sakes! Two of 'em! It's gettin' worse an' worse.

MRS. B. That's what I say. The idee of a deacon of the church advertisin' for a wife when he could have got any one of a half dozen right around here jest for the askin'. There's Elnora an' Cynthiana Pink an' Martha Dusenbury an' Polly Hatter would have been glad of the chance. I say it's outrageous.

MRS. G. It's scandalous, that's what it is. Then to think of his comin' home with two of 'em. Why, he oughter be turned out of the church an' arrested for biggermy.

MRS. B. It's my opinion he ought to be tarred an' feathered an' rode out of town on a rail.

MRS. G. Yes, an' them two women along with him.

MRS. B. I'm thinkin' mebbe 'twould be a hard job. Mrs. Pusley was down by the depot when they got off the train an' she says one of 'em's a reg'lar Amazon—most six feet tall.

MRS. G. Do tell!

MRS. B. An' she says the other one's considerably smaller, but she wore a veil so she couldn't tell how she looked.

MRS. G. I don't wonder she wore a veil.

MRS. B. Neither do I. Wall I must hurry. I've got to go down to the store for some ginger. I s'pose you're goin' to Mrs. Purdy's party Thursday afternoon.

MRS. G. Yes, I'm callatin' to if nothin' happens.

MRS. B. So'm I. Wal, good-bye. (*Exit.*)

MRS. G. Dear me! I'll never get those pies made in the world if I don't get to work an' stop talkin' so much. I declare, here comes somebody else.

(*Enter* ELNORA AND CYNTHIANA PINK.)

ELNORA } Good mornin', Mrs. Grant.
CYNTHIANA }

MRS. G. Wal, of all things! If it ain't Elnora an' Cynthiana Pink. How be ye?

BOTH. We're pretty well. We've come over to see if you're goin' to the party Thursday.

MRS. G. I'm plannin' on it if I get these pies made in time.

ELNORA. We thought we'd like to walk along with you.

CYNTHIANA. Because you know it's quite the thing for girls an' young women nowdays to have chaperonies.

ELNORA. An' we thought you'd be just the nicest kind of a chaperony.

MRS. G. (*Aside*). The idee! Me a chaperon, an' they're both of 'em oldern I be.

CYNTHIANA. What do you say, Mrs. Grant?

MRS. G. Why, of course, I'll be real glad to go with you or to have you go with me—either way you want.

ELNORA. That's real kind of you. We want to be in style because you know Mrs. Purdy puts on so many airs.

MRS. G. She can afford to—anybody with as much money as she's got.

CYNTHIANA. And say! Do you know she hasn't invited a single man to the party—not one.

ELNORA. Yes, it's just for women. Isn't it a shame. I think 'twould be real nice if she'd had just a few men. Te, he, he!

MRS. G. I s'pose you mean unmarried ones, of course.

ELNORA. Why—er—yes, I guess so.

MRS. G. Well, there's some men I should hope wouldn't be invited—and some women too.

CYNTHIANA. I suppose you mean Azariah Spriggs, don't you. I should hope so, too.

MRS. G. I mean him an' his two wives.

ELNORA. Oh my land! His two wives? I heard he was married but I didn't know he had two of 'em.

MRS. G. Wal, he has. One's a great big six-footer an' the other's a little runt. He came home with 'em both this mornin'. I don't know how many more he's got.

ELNORA. My goodness! He's getting most as bad as Solomon or Brigham Young. I'm real glad I didn't accept him.

MRS. G. What? Did he actually pop the question to you, Elnora?

ELNORA. Well—er—that is er—not in just so many words, but he hinted it.

CYNTHIANA. And so he did to me. Te, he, he! but I didn't take the hint.

ELNORA. You know we're quite young yet so we don't need to be in a hurry to accept everybody that comes along.

MRS. G. Wal, you oughter be thankful you didn't accept the Deacon.

ELNORA. But I don't know what I might have done if he'd pressed his suit.

MRS. G. Wal, I don't know's I ever heard of his havin' his suit pressed an' 'specially his pants, but land!—who'd a thought that would make any difference 'bout his gettin' a wife?

ELNORA. Oh, I didn't mean his—er—his pants. Te, he, he! I meant if he'd been more ardent in his attentions—that is—had been more insistent in his proposals, you know.

MRS. G. He seems to have been ardent enough this time. I shouldn't worry a mite about what might have been.

CYNTHIANA. Oh, we're not worrying, Mrs. Grant. But do come, Elnora, we must be going. Besides we shouldn't be telling all our little love affairs. Te, he, he!

ELNORA. Yes, Cynthiana, we must go, and we'll see you Thursday, Mrs. Grant. Good-bye. (*Exeunt.*)

MRS. G. Dear me! Those old girls hate to admit that they couldn't get husbands, but after all there's worse things than bein' "old maids." (*Arises*). Wal, now I've got these apples peeled, I'll have to go'n make them pies or John won't have none for dinner. (*Exit.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE: *A sitting room at the home of* MRS. PURDY. (*Enter Mrs. Purdy, L. rear, and passes to opposite side of stage.*)

MRS. P. (*Calling off R, rear*). Nora! Nora!

(*Enter* NORA.)

NORA. Did yez be callin' me, mum?

MRS. P. Yes, Nora. I want you to be ready to attend the door when my guests arrive.

NORA. Yis, mum, I'm ready any time.

MRS. P. It's almost time for them to come. Have you everything ready for them, Nora?

NORA. Yis, mum. It don't be takin' me very long for thot bein' as you've not goin' to fade 'em heavy.

MRS. P. Only a light lunch. Of course they'll expect something.

NORA. Shure, an' they will that. (*Bell rings.*) Faix, an' here's some wan comin' a-ready. (*Exit, L. front.*)

MRS. P. Dear me, this party is going to be a dreadful bore. Just because we are fairly well-to-do, the people around here think we must entertain, entertain all the time. And now this new servant girl is so awkward about such things makes it worse. I shall be glad when it's all over. I hope Lottie will come.

(*Enter* NORA, *followed by* MRS. GOWDY, MRS. GREEN, MRS. BROWN AND MRS. BUMPUS.)

NORA. Faix, an' here's four iv thim already, mum.

MRS. P. Come right in, ladies. I am very glad to see you.

MRS. GOWDY. No gladdern' we are to be here, Mrs. Purdy.

MRS. BROWN. That's so, we think your parties are awful nice.

MRS. PURDY. Nora, take the ladies' hats into the hall.

NORA. Yis, mum. (*She takes hats in arms and places one on her head.*)

MRS. P. Why, Nora, don't put them on your head.

NORA. Faix, an' I niver thought but 'twas me own.

SEVERAL. (*Aside.*) Horrors!

(NORA *removes hat and drops one of the others.*)

NORA. Ach, worry! worry!

MRS. GREEN. Gracious! My new hat!

MRS. PURDY. Dear me, Nora, you must be more careful. (*Picks up hat and hands to* NORA.)

NORA. Yis, mum, I will. (*Exit. Bell rings again.*)

MRS. BUMPUS. There's somebody else. S'pose its Mrs. Grant?

MRS. BROWN. No, 'tain't her, because we stopped there on our way an' she wasn't anywhere near ready.

(NORA *assists* MRS. MOORE *into room. The latter appears to be all out of breath.*)

NORA. Here's some wan ilse, mum, an' she's puffin' like a steam engine.

SEVERAL. Oh, it's Mrs. Moore.

MRS. PURDY. Come right in and take off your hat, Mrs. Moore.

MRS. M. (*panting.*) Land o' goshen! I'm just—all out o'—breath a comin'—up them steps. Thought I never would get to the top. (MRS. PURDY *helps her to remove her hat.*)

MRS. PURDY. Here, take this easy chair, Mrs. Moore. (MRS. M. *sits down.*) Is there anything I can do for you?

MRS. GOWDY. Let me take a fan an' I'll fan her. That's what I allers do when my husband has sech spells. (MRS. P. *gets fan and* MRS. GOWDY *fans* MRS. M. *Bell rings. Exit* NORA.)

MRS. GREEN. Well, now, there's somebody else comin'.

MRS. PURDY. Do you feel any better, Mrs. Moore?

MRS. M. Yes, I'll be all right in a few minutes, I guess.

(NORA *shows* MRS. PRINGLE *in.*)

NORA. Here's another loidy, mum. She says her name is Hay.

MRS. PRINGLE. Hay? Why, no this is Mrs. Pringle. (*Aloud*). Good afternoon, Mrs. Pringle.

MRS. PRINGLE. Hey?

NORA. Begorra, she's deef as a hitchin' post.

MRS. PURDY. (*Very loud.*) I said, "good afternoon." Let me take your hat. (MRS. PURDY *takes hat and hands to* NORA *who takes it from room.*)

MRS. PRINGLE. I declare! Here's Mrs. Bumpus an' Mrs. Brown an'—why, what in the world's the matter with Mrs. Moore?

MRS. GOWDY. Oh, nothin' only she's all out of breath a comin' up the steps.

MRS. PRINGLE. Do tell! Fell out of bed an' sprained her wrist? Ain't that too bad!

MRS. GOWDY. (*Very loud.*) I didn't say she fell out of bed. She can't breathe.

MRS. PRINGLE. Can't breathe? Well now that's too bad. That's jest what ailed Sam Perkins when he died. He lost his breath. (*Aside.*)

MRS. G. My! How consolin'.

MRS. BUMPUS. (*Loud.*) It's the asthma. She's had another attack.

MRS. PRINGLE. Chasin' the cat? Land sakes! No wonder she can't breathe.

(*Bell rings.*)

MRS. GREEN. Now I jest wonder who that is. (*Enter* NORA *with* ELNORA *and* CYNTHIANA PINK *and* MRS. GRANT.)

MRS. GRANT. I hope we hain't kept you waitin'.

MRS. PURDY. Oh no, not at all. Come right in, ladies. (*They remove hats and* NORA *carries them from room.*)

MRS. BUMPUS. We've jest got here ourselves.

MRS. BROWN. But how in the world did you ever get here so soon? You weren't near ready when we came by.

MRS. GRANT. I wouldn't have got ready as 'twas if't hadn't been for Elnora an' Cynthiana. They jest pitched right in an' did up the work while I was combin' my hair an' changin' my dress. Nothin' like havin' good neighbors, you know.

MRS. GOWDY. We all know that Elnora an' Cynthiana are real good neighbors.

MRS. PURDY. I've been told they have a reputation for bein' splendid neighbors as well as excellent housekeepers.

MRS. GREEN. That's true, too. I often wonder that some good men hain't picked 'em up long 'fore this.

ELNORA. Did you ever hear such scandalous talk in your life, Cynthiana?

CYNTHIANA. Never! Just as if we hadn't had lots of chances to get married if we'd wanted to.

ELNORA. But we don't propose to—er——

MRS. BUMPUS. Why of course you wouldn't do the proposin' 'cept leap years.

ELNORA. I mean we don't propose to accept any clodhopper that comes along. We're young yet.

MRS. MOORE. I don't blame you girls a bit. As I told Mr. Moore this mornin', "I'd rather live in single wretchedness than to be spliced up to a man like Bige Wheeler or Philander Stebbins or some others I might mention.

ELNORA. Well, for goodness sakes, don't mention any more like them.

MRS. PRINGLE. Say! Be they all here now?

MRS. BUMPUS. All but Mis' Fletcher an' she couldn't come on account of the rheumatiz in her left knee.

MRS. PRINGLE. What's that? Her man gone off on a spree? You don't say!

MRS. BUMPUS. No, I didn't say "spree." I said she had rheumatiz in her knee.

MRS. PRINGLE. Hey?

MRS. BUMPUS. (*Yelling*). Rheumatiz—in—her—knee.

MRS. PRINGLE. Oh! Rheumatiz is it? Wal now that's too bad. I hadn't heerd about it.

MRS. BUMPUS. I guess I'd go on a spree if I had to yell at her.

MRS. PRINGLE. Been havin' it quite a spell, you say?

MRS. GOWDY. (*Loud.*) No, she was just took with it yesterday.

MRS. PURDY. I was real sorry Mrs. Fletcher and Mrs. Holliday couldn't come.

MRS. MOORE. Why, isn't Mrs. Holliday comin'?

MRS. PURDY. No, she sent her regrets saying she had to go to her husband's third cousin's funeral.

MRS. MOORE. Wal now ain't that funny I hadn't heard about it. I allers hear of all the funerals, but then tain't no wonder after all seein' we've had so much sensation here lately.

(*Enter* NORA.)

NORA. Plaze, mum, whin do yez be havin' the hash?

MRS. BROWN. (*Aside.*) Hash? Who ever heard of hash at a party?

MRS. PURDY. Why, Nora, what do you mean?

NORA. I mean the grub—the vittles.

MRS. PURDY. Oh any time now. I'll come right out and see about it. (*Exeunt* MRS. PURDY AND NORA.)

MRS. BROWN. The idea of havin' hash at sech doin's.

MRS. MOORE. I s'pect that's the new hired gal Mrs. Purdy was expectin'.

MRS. BUMPUS. Ain't she the stupidest critter you ever saw?

CYNTHIANA. I'm awful glad Mrs. Purdy didn't invite them two women to the party.

MRS. MOORE. What women be you referrin' to, Cynthiana?

CYNTHIANA. Goodness! Don't you know? Why, them two women that everybody's been talkin' about for the last few days. Where've you been all the time?

MRS. MOORE. Oh, you mean them two over to Deacon Spriggs?

CYNTHIANA. Of course.

MRS. PRINGLE. What's that? Who's been throwin' their shoe at the pigs?

CYNTHIANA. (*loud.*) Nobody! I was talking about the two husseys over to Azariah Spriggses.

MRS. PRINGLE. Oh, is that it? Now ain't it a shame an' a disgrace sech goin's on in this peaceable neighborhood. I declare, I'm clean disgusted.

OTHERS. An' so are we.

MRS. BUMPUS. I told my husband this noon that if they were here I was comin' right straight home.

MRS. GREEN. I don't blame ye one bit. I would too.

MRS. GOWDY. To tell the truth, I guess we'd all be for goin' home.

(*Enter* MRS. PURDY.)

MRS. PURDY. Why, ladies, don't talk about going home yet, I have a pleasant surprise for you.

SEVERAL. (*Startled.*) Oh, a surprise?

MRS. PURDY. Yes, a delightful surprise. No doubt you've heard me speak often of my old friend and schoolmate, Lottie Gardner?

SEVERAL. Yes, we have!

MRS. PURDY. Well, I am happy to say that she is here this afternoon. I had almost given up her coming until a few moments ago when———

(*Enter* MRS. DEACON SPRIGGS.)

MRS. S. When I pounced in upon her all of a sudden.

MRS. PURDY. Ladies, let me introduce you to my dear friend who until a few days ago was Lottie Gardner but now—the Mrs. Deacon Spriggs.

ALL. O—o—oh! Mrs.—Deacon—Spriggs?

MRS. S. Yes, the wife of your old neighbor, and I trust we may all be friends, and that I shall enjoy it here in your pleasant village.

SEVERAL. But we thought—yes, we thought——

MRS. S. Well, what did you think? Of course I know that my coming must have been a subject of comment.

MRS. GOWDY. Why, we thought there were two of you—that is——

MR. S. Two of me?

MRS. GREEN. She means that we thought there were two Mrs. Deacon Spriggses.

MRS. S. Well really, I believe you are correct in thinking so.

ALL. You do?

MRS. S. Yes, I understond that my husband has been married before, but there is only *one* Mrs. Spriggs living at the present time, and she is now standing before you.

ELNORA. But who is that other woman?

CYNTHIANA. The big tall one. We thought——

MRS. S. You mean Mrs. McGuire? Why she is a woman I brought with me to help clean the house. Ha! ha! Did you think my husband was a bigamist?

ELNORA. Why I———

CYNTHIANA. We didn't know of course.

MRS. MOORE. Would you mind telling us if you first heard of Mr. Spriggs through his advertisement?

MRS. S. I am perfectly willing to tell you that I never saw his advertisement and that I first met Mr. Spriggs last summer while he was camping with Mr. and Mrs. Purdy.

MRS. PURDY. At——— (*Any nearby resort.*)

MRS.GOWDY. But you know he really *did* advertise for a wife?

MRS. S. I know that he told his nephew to write an advertisement for a scrub woman and that the nephew played a trick on him and the deacon hasn't forgiven him for it since.

MRS. GRANT. I do think we ought to ask her pardon.

MRS. PRINGLE. What's the matter? What's the trouble now?

MRS. GOWDY. (*very loud in* MRS. *P.'s ear.*) It's Mrs. Spriggs an' 'twasn't on account of the advertisement at all that they got married, an he ain't got but one wife either.

MRS. PRINGLE. Land sakes! Do tell! That's jest what I thought all the time.

MRS. MOORE. I'd jest like to know who's responsible for all these stories anyway.

MRS. BROWN. So would I.

MRS. S. Well, don't let's try to find out. Let's forget all about it and be real good friends and neighbors.

MRS. BUMPUS. Will you really forgive us? We'll be more careful how we talk about folks in the future.

ALL. Yes, so we will.

NORA. (*at door.*) The vittles is all ready, mum.

MRS. PURDY. Come, ladies, refreshments are waiting. I am sure that when you get acquainted with her you will all like MRS. DEACON SPRIGGS.

CURTAIN.

The Bugbee Entertainments

ARE FAVORITES EVERYWHERE

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